

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 26, 2000 MEETING OF
THE COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m. by Chairman Carozza with the following members present: Commissioners' Haber, Kowalski, Maheu, Milewski, Nicol, Stankye and Wilkinson. Commissioner Munkenbeck arrived at 9:45 a.m. and Commissioner Johnson arrived at 10:00 a.m. Commissioners Brammer, Gomeau, Mullen and Vendetta were excused. Staff members Morrissette, Lewandowski, Ouellette, Piechota and Piskura were present.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2000 meeting.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Haber and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2000 meeting. Motion carried.

Chairman Carozza called for a motion to approve the staff reports for the periods from June 15, 2000 through September 14, 2000.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to approve the Staff Reports for the period of June 15, 2000 - July 14, 2000, July 15, 2000 – August 14, 2000 and August 15, 2000 – September 14, 2000. Motion carried.

Moving to item 4 a.) under Unfinished Business Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the Fallen Firefighters Memorial project. He stated that since the Lt. Governor's September 12 press conference she is continuing to publicize the Memorial project wherever she speaks publicly and as she speaks for the press. Her main issue right now is the Memorial project. Her goal is to have all of the funding in place by Thanksgiving. This goal is pretty ambitious but at least we now have a goal in place. Recently at the Connecticut State Firefighters' convention we had an opportunity to begin selling limited edition lithographs of the original artwork. There is a limited quantity of 500 signed and numbered by the artist. At the convention nearly \$1,000 worth were sold. The Hartford County Fire Emergency Plan as part of their 50th Anniversary celebration commissioned the development of a limited edition Commemorative envelope with canceled postage. All of the proceeds from this sale will be going to the memorial project. The committee did convene for a meeting recently and it appears things are moving forward. This afternoon the Lt. Governor has invited Paul Walsh and him to attend a taping of a weekly cable TV show that she appears in. The memorial project will be the main topic. Since last December, we have collected over \$10,000 here at the Commission through the sales of teeshirts and direct donations.

Moving to item 4 b.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the freelancing issue. Back in June the subcommittee had developed a draft policy in addition to a no compete agreement for our Adjunct Instructors. These were sent to the Office of the Attorney General for review. We met with our Associate Attorney General last week and he felt that the policy looked good. One issue he had with the Instructor agreement was that he was not sure if it's enforceable for current employees. That was something that required further research. He also suggested a number of minor changes for the agreement. If the enforceability of the agreement is an issue we're really almost back to square one. We're going to have to look at other options at that point.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if the Associate Attorney General suggested any alternative.

Mr. Morrissette stated that one suggestion was consider hiring adjuncts under personal service agreements. That way we may impose any type of requirements. Discussions have taken place but we have been told that personnel within the state system can only remain on personal service agreements for a limited length of time. After that they are to be reverted to full or part-time employees.

A discussion period followed.

Moving to item 4 c.) Mr. Morrissette gave an update on the state surplus property in Meriden. As indicated in recent staff reports, the Meriden property was acquired two months ago. We had an opportunity to utilize a lot of staff labor to clean up the building and property. This past weekend we had labor donated by the Operating Engineers Union Local in Meriden. They came out with a bulldozer and cleaned the property. There's really not a lot more that we need to do on the exterior with the exception of some tree trimming and removal of the underground storage tanks, which is the responsibility of the Department of Public Works (DPW). The last word we have from DPW is they have received three bids necessary for the tank removal project and they will be assigning it sometime in the very near future. Our primary goal for the current fiscal year is to use the facility for cold storage. Director Piskura will discuss later his interest to locate the CPAT program there in the spring.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about signage installation for the Meriden facility.

Mr. Lewandowski stated that he installed one sign this morning and would finish install additional signs by the end of the week.

Commissioner Kowalski stated that the issue of freelancing should be pursued and resolved as quickly as possible. The agency should encourage the Attorney General's Office to move a little bit quicker to resolve the issues of the agreement and that it would be appreciated.

Moving to item 5 a.) under New Business, Mr. Morrissette asked to defer this item until next month due to the illness of Debbie Richardson.

Moving to item 5 b.) Chairman Carozza invited Messrs. Hacku and Haber to step forward.

Mr. Morrissette stated that the Certification Division recommended we recognize these two individuals who have given of themselves over a decade each to the agency. They primarily served as proctors for the Certification Division. He stated that he had worked personally with both of these individuals while being responsible for certification. He remarked that they are can do people and anytime you needed anything you only had to make one phone call and the job was taken care of. Because of that

attitude we had the ability to work with a small group of proctors. Their work ethic is a testament to their professionalism.

Chairman Carozza addressed Mr. Haber by saying that he would like to read into the record the following statement:

“On behalf of the State of Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, it is my pleasure to extend to you the Commission’s appreciation and gratitude for over 11 years of dedicated service to the Commission. Your personal dedication significantly contributed to the continued success of the fire service certification system here in Connecticut. Best wishes for future health and happiness in your retirement. Congratulations and thank you for all your efforts.”

Chairman Carozza then presented Mr. Haber an engraved clock as a small token of the Commission’s appreciation.

Mr. Haber stated that it was a pleasure working for the Commission.

Chairman Carozza addressed Mr. Hacku by saying that he would like to read into the record the following statement:

“On behalf of the State of Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, it is my pleasure to extend to you the Commission’s appreciation and gratitude for nearly 14 years of dedicated service to the Commission. Your personal dedication significantly contributed to the continued success of the fire service certification system here in Connecticut. Best wishes for future health and happiness in your retirement.

Chairman Carozza then presented Mr. Hacku an engraved clock as a small token of the Commission’s appreciation.

Mr. Hacku reminisced about his experience while working for the Commission and stated that he was very happy to have had this experience.

Moving to New Business, Chairman Carozza called on Commissioner Nicol to open the nominations for the election of officers.

Commissioner Nicol called for nominations for the office of CHAIRMAN for the Commission.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to place Peter Carozza’s name in nomination for the position of Chairman. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and SECONDED by Commissioner Milewski to close the nomination for the position of Chairman and to direct the Secretary to cast one ballot for Peter Carozza. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

Commissioner Nicol called for nominations for the office of VICE CHAIRMAN to the Commission.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to place Kevin Kowalski's name in nomination for the position of Vice Chairman. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Stankye and SECONDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck to close the nomination for the position of Vice Chairman and to direct the Secretary to cast one ballot for Kevin Kowalski. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

Commissioner Nicol called for nominations for the office of SECRETARY to the Commission.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Wilkinson and SECONDED by Commissioner Munkenbeck to place Edward Haber's name in nomination for the position of Secretary. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Stankye and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to close the nomination for the position of Secretary and to direct the Chairman to cast one ballot for Edward Haber. The motion was unanimously APPROVED.

Chairman Carozza thanked members of Commission for their support. He stated that through their support the Commission has made great strides over the years and he is sure that the Commission will continue to move forward. He stated that he would also like to thank Jeff Morrisette and the entire staff at the Commission for the great job they do on a daily basis. All that is happening with this Academy and the Commission are certainly a great credit to Jeff and his staff.

Moving to item 5 d.) Mr. Morrisette directed the Commission's attention to the FY 01/03 Biennial Budget submittal in addition to the summary of budget items distributed this morning. He then asked Mr. O'Neil to provide an overview.

Mr. O'Neil explained that additional funding was requested in the operating expense area for training curriculum development and for utilities for the Meriden facility. Funding was also requested for Capital (DPW) Facility Projects; (i.e., Transfer Flashover Simulator to adjacent Bradley Airport site and for Facility/site improvements to the Meriden Facility). Other expenses proposed in the budget are for equipment (i.e., Portable Automobile Fire Prop, Maze Training Device, Vehicle Exhaust Venting System, Personal Protective Equipment, Facility/Plant Upkeep, Two-way Radios, Computer Workstations and Computer Lab.

Mr. Morrisette stated that by October 15 the agency is required to submit reduction options as well as expansion items. Today we are looking to obtain the Commission's concurrence that we submit the Limited Access Highway program as our reduction option as has been done in past year.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Milewski to offer the Limited Access Highway program fund as the agency's budget reduction option. Motion carried.

Mr. Morrisette stated that in terms of expansion items the agency is looking at a number of items that the Training Division has recommended for both facility related and training programs. We're not as yet ready to bring those forth to you, but again based upon the current status of the state budget he indicated that he was not so sure that anything is going to be moving forward. He mentioned for the

Commission's information, we received late last week a notification of an allotment reduction to our current fiscal year budget by about \$21,000. All agency budgets have been reduced to aid the state budget shortfall that is being forecasted. Thus it appears like there's going to be some belt tightening for the remainder of the fiscal year. We're also required to submit an impact statement of what the reduction does to the legislature but first it has to be passed to OPM for review.

A question and answer period followed regarding the five-year budget plan.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Nicol and SECONDED by Commissioner Haber to approve the FY 01/02 & FY 02/03 Budget Submittal. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5 e.) Mr. Morrisette inquired if Commissioners had questions on the Agency's Annual Report for FY 1999/2000.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kowalski and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson approving the FY 1999/2000 Annual Report. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5 f.) Mr. Piechota stated that the certification regulations were last revised in 1996. These revisions are proposed to reflect changes to the NFPA Standards, addition of new levels, etc. Mr. Piechota gave an overview of the changes being proposed to the Commission's regulations (attached). He then asked the Commissioners to review these changes over the next month and bring forth any questions they have at the October meeting.

In respect to one proposal Commissioner Nicol inquired about the impact on certification resulting from a three-year leave of absence due to a military commitment.

Mr. Piechota stated that certainly there would be a provision that could be put into effect.

Vice Chairman Kowalski inquired if research could be done on other states as far as what they do for fire service certification and de-certification.

Mr. Morrisette stated while we try to remain as sensitive as we can to recruitment and retention issues, he stated that the re-certification or currency issue is a direct result of fire chiefs approaching us and inquiring why we don't have a re-certification requirement. This proposal is a small step in that direction. This may be tolerable, as we don't think the fire service would support a full re-certification requirement. We felt this was important to bring up for discussion purposes and for you to go back to your respective organizations for discussion and bring comments and concerns back to us.

Commissioner Munkenbeck expressed caution over the use of the wording "appointed to a position, ceasing to hold a position or failure to appoint".

Commissioner Maheu stated that he thinks that a policy of this type "revocation of certification" is an excellent move. However, he feels there should be some means of retention, because just to have a revocation clause without a provision for retention at the same time could have a negative connotation.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the addition of the Master Fire Service Lead Instructor level.

Mr. Piechota stated that the level of Master Fire Service Lead Instructor would be a Connecticut specific level that the Commission would develop criteria for.

Mr. Morrisette stated the reason for proposing this specific item is that it may be a way in which to differentiate between our employees and local certified Fire Service Instructors.

A discussion period followed.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Munkenbeck and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to table Certification Regulation Revision Proposal and place it the October 31, 2000 Commission meeting agenda. Motion carried.

Moving to item 5 g.) Mr. Piechota stated for the Commission's attention that we currently purchase our written examination questions from Performance Training Systems (PTS) in Florida. Their procedures are such that they will support legally and otherwise the most current bank of questions. The question had recently come up regarding the newest bank of questions for Fire Service Instructor specifically those questions that are referenced to the sixth edition of the IFSTA Fire Service Instructor manual. We have a responsibility to provide questions that are referenced to a reference source that is readily available to the fire service. The Training Division has found some serious problems with the sixth edition of the IFSTA manual. They have found inconsistencies within the document, changes, and some errors in the content. The Training Division stated that they would prefer to continue to use the fifth edition of the manual that is no longer available to the public. PTS has indicated that if we choose to do that, they would not stand behind any legal challenge should that ever occur. They advised us to perhaps get an opinion from the Attorney General's Office as to the direction we might look at. Our Assistant Attorney General feels the same way and advises that we should look at ways of using the most current edition of the manual with revisions if necessary. The Attorney General stated that it would be very difficult, if challenged, for us to justify or defend our decision to use an older edition of the manual. He stated that he would work on this issue with the Training Division and keep the Commission apprised.

Mr. Piskura stated that probably the most grievous concern is that Chapter 8 contradicts Chapter 3. Further research will be done on this issue.

Moving to item 5 h.) Mr. Piskura gave an update of the Candidate Physical Ability Testing Program (CPAT). He stated that the Candidate Physical Ability Testing Program has taken off beyond his forecasting. It has cost the agency approximately \$25,000 to acquire the equipment required for this exam. The acquisition of the Meriden site has solved a problem. If we were to administer this exam here at the Academy as we originally intended, it would have to be broken down and set up every time. It takes two hours to set up for the test and two hours to break it down. We need a fixed site to conduct this exam and that is why we would like to set it up at the Meriden facility. He then proceeded to explain the CPAT process.

A discussion period followed.

Chairman Carozza left the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Moving to item 5 i.) Mr. Piskura related some of the history on teaching the ladder bailout. The Academy currently offers instruction in the head first bail technique in the two-day Firefighter Safety Survival program and a little less intensive in the RIT Team training program. Many months ago a Captain in Manteca, California was killed practicing the "head-first bailout technique". A 116-page accident investigation report on the Blue Gum Training incident was prepared. This incident has

proved to be a shocker around the country and the teaching of this technique has become very controversial. The International Association of Fire Chiefs maintains a chat room and on that chat room various conversations occur between venerables in the United States Fire Service, most notably Alan Brunacini, Ron Coleman and retired Assistant Chief Carl Holmes from Oklahoma. Alan Brunacini typed in his keyboard that “anybody that’s teaching this techniques “is asinine”. Mr. Piskura stated that this certainly got his interest because we are teaching this technique and he certainly respects Alan Brunacini. This caused us to investigate what we’re doing and if it is appropriate on various levels (i.e., is it effectively correct and is it morally correct).

Lead Instructor Chris Zak was asked to review this program and comment on the 116-page report of the Blue Gum Training incident. A more brief and concise report than the 116-page accident report is the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). The NIOSH report makes four recommendations none of which Mr. Piskura finds onerous because we already comply with the recommendations. In addition he stated that when he went around the state the last five months, he solicited written comments from individuals who have either participated in the RIT or the Safety and Survival program which we included in the distributed material. When this came up in conversation in many cases the students in the class were very vehement over the idea of the Academy contemplating stopping the teaching of this technique. Quite frankly Mr. Piskura stated that he was warmly surprised that people capitulated and submitted a lot of written comments. Some of them were very well done and some less well done, but it indicated their particular value of this technique.

How did we get here, we brought in people from Illinois and Pennsylvania to deliver a Train-the-Trainer. Those two Train-the-Trainer programs cost over \$5,000 and from those programs we synthesized our own program. That program in itself has been adopted and changed five to eight times since then. Most notably for example, we’ve added a Gemptor harness for a belay point to students going through this program. We at the Academy are monitoring what’s going on with the safety of students. That’s one component he feels that the Academy is rock solid on as it is taught in a very professional manner. One of the things that turned up during research of this subject is a piece that we have no control over and that is what happens after the students graduate. While in Oklahoma recently he learned of five known court cases regarding this technique where people have been injured and are off the job. In almost every case human error took place and they were not using the same techniques that we use. When we conduct training at the Academy, we are rock solid and safe. The only thing that could go wrong is equipment failure and that could happen in anything we do here.

In the content of what we teach, first we teach the students how to read environmental conditions so they don’t get into a bad situation and that’s emphasized. Then we tell the students the only time you will use this technique is when your life is going to be extinguished. We tell the students they have two choices, they will either be incinerated where they are or take their chances outside. This training is about giving a firefighter another tool to possibly survive a situation that goes totally bad. Mr. Piskura stated that he would find it disastrous to remove the tool from the firefighter’s toolbox just because some people have used the technique inappropriately. He asked the Commission to ratify that the Academy continue to teach this practice because it is another tool in the firefighter’s toolbox. This is not the entire course. This is a very small part of the course that is taught to keep firefighters safe.

The predominant part of this class is the education of reading the environment so you don’t get into the situation where you need to practice that adverse ladder bailout.

Vice Chairman Kowalski called for a motion in support of the ladder bailout technique.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Milewski and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to continue to support the ladder bailout technique.

Commissioner Johnson inquired if everyone had the opportunity to discuss this matter with their respective organizations. He indicated that he would refrain from voting until he could bring this to the attention of the Career Chiefs Association.

Commissioner Maheu stated that he agrees Commissioners need to discuss this matter with their constituents.

Mr. Piskura stated if we don't teach this technique he guarantees that there would be 50 individuals teaching this technique in the state. We've invested \$5,000 in this practice and we're doing it rock solid safe. There are some people across the state looking at trade magazines and teaching this technique. Whatever we do here at the Academy we need the support of the Commission. What happens in these other places we are not responsible for it.

Mr. Morrissette stated if the general desire is to table this item, then we would make our resources available to your organizations to provide background information.

A discussion period followed.

Vice Chairman suggested continuing on with the motion and additional discussion as may be necessary. He stated that the Commission should for the purposes of supporting an ongoing program support this particular training evolution and then put it on the agenda for next month.

Commissioner Milewski Amended the motion as follows: "and place this item on next month's meeting agenda to allow the Commission members to bring this forward to their respective constituents."

Commissioner Munkenbeck stated that he was in agreement because we are already doing it we have to support it now and we can revisit it. The second problem is this comes right back on the committee on freelancing because if we don't do it I can see this turning into a nice gold mine industry which could put people in danger. I'm another person that's kind of divided on this subject, but I see the purpose and the use for it and they are teaching it now. If we don't support it now, we're leaving them hanging for a month.

Commissioner Nicol inquired how the action taken today by the Commission would affect planned program deliveries.

Mr. Piskura stated that RIT training is different than Firefighter Safety & Survival training. The ladder bailout technique is a small part of RIT training where as it is a much more significant part of Firefighter Safety & Survival training. The Firefighter Safety & Survival is self-extrication and RIT is intervention by going into a building and knowingly get firefighters out. When you are on a RIT Team you are going into a situation that's gone bad because you are going in to retrieve firefighters. So we also put the ladder bailout technique into the RIT class.

Commissioner Nicol inquired if this item is tabled today will you not be able to move forward on the seminars that have been announced.

Mr. Piskura stated that he would like to continue on with the already schedule program deliveries.

Commissioner Nicol inquired how long the Academy has been teaching this technique.

Mr. Lewandowski stated that the Academy has been teaching this technique since 1994 with the Recruit Training Program and the smoke-divers portion of that program. As far as the Firefighter Safety & Survival we've offered probably about a half dozen in calendar offerings and at least one dozen contract classes. This is a very popular program and the requests are split between career and volunteer departments. As the leader in the state for fire training we should set the course that's going to be taken and not be just a passenger on the boat. We do offer training in Firefighter Safety & Survival going on and Vice Chairman Kowalski's recommendation that it is probably best we continue on with the program at this time and not modify it.

Commissioner Wilkinson stated that he was in agreement with Vice Chairman Kowalski. He also stated that he has spoken extensively with Chris Zak about this subject and there is no doubt in his mind that he is very passionate about this training. All of the proper background training and safety are part of this overall training spectrum. What we have to keep in mind is this is a dangerous profession and people are going to get hurt possibly in training as well as having a better chance of getting hurt in a real life scenarios that they are dealing with. As long as all these precautions are being taken he does not see where this is any more risky than training in the flashover simulator or the burn building.

Commissioner Johnson asked for the motion to be restated.

The Executive Secretary restated the motion as such; *"A MOTION was made by Commissioner Milewski and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to continue to support the ladder bailout technique."*

Commissioner Milewski amended the motion as follows: *"and place this item on next month's meeting agenda to allow the Commission members to bring this forward to their respective constituents."*

Vice Chairman Kowalski called for a vote on the motion and amendment.

With a two-thirds vote the motion and amendment carried.

Commissioner Nicol voted against the motion and Commissioners Johnson and Maheu abstained.

Commissioner Wilkinson inquired if Lead Instructor Chris Zak could be invited to next month's meeting to answer any questions that arise.

Commissioner Nicol inquired about the status of a letter in the Commission package to Assistant Attorney General (AG) Steve Sarnoski regarding John Bolton.

Mr. Morrissette stated that basically the AG's Office has provided verbal guidance to the agency to aid in responding to Mr. Bolton's requests. The AG's Office will not provide any assistance to us in investigating the matter. Their advice was to write Mr. Bolton and indicate there is nothing further that can be done because the individual who was certified now meets all the requirements. While Mr. Bolton appears to be technically accurate it has no current bearing.

Commissioner Nicol inquired when was the last time the State Fire Administrator's position was evaluated. He asked the Vice Chairman Kowalski to pursue this matter on behalf of the Commission.

Mr. Morrisette stated that a request has been made through the Department of Administrative Services to review the agency as a whole.

Commissioner Stankye inquired about the status of the training program for the use of a Thermal Imaging Camera.

Mr. Lewandowski stated that a meeting has been scheduled for tomorrow to review the final document and it should be ready to go shortly.

Mr. Morrisette stated that he was informed by Commissioner Mullen today that he underwent surgery last week so he was not able to attend today's meeting.

The Commission has been invited by Hartford Hospital to attend an open house on the 28th of this month. At the open house they will preview a video on healthcare evacuation procedures which the NFPA produced at Hartford Hospital. The Commission made the initial contact for the NFPA with Hartford Hospital.

Mr. Morrisette stated that the final Guidance Document for OSHA Compliant Training for Interior Level Firefighters has been distributed to Commissioners. The agency is now in the process of scheduling meetings with the various Regional Fire Schools as well as any entities that would like to utilize this document.

Mr. Morrisette invited Commissioners to stay after the meeting to view the Public Service Announcements with Lt. Governor Rell produced by TV 30 and an in-house video produced for the Fire Line program.

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Haber and SECONDED by Commissioner Wilkinson to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Vice Chairman Kowalski adjourned the meeting at 11:52 a.m.

Dated: _____

Edward F. Haber, Secretary
Commission on Fire
Prevention and Control